DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 510 CS 211 477

AUTHOR Hynes, Nancy
TITLE Virginia Woolf's "Three Guineas" and Betty Friedan's "The Second Stage": The Role of the Outsider.
PUB DATE Jun 88
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Women's Studies Association (Minneapolis, MN, June 22-26, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Females; *Feminism; *Literary Criticism; Sex Bias; *Sex Role; Social Change; *Social Structure; Twentieth Century Literature
IDENTIFIERS *Feminist Scholarship; Friedan (Betty); Theme (Literary); *Womens Literature; Woolf (Virginia)

ABSTRACT

Although both Virginia Woolf in "Three Guineas" and Betty Friedan in "The Second Stage" address the role of women as "outsiders" in a male-dominated society, their attitudes towards the issue--despite certain similarities--differ in at least one important way. "Three Guineas," a feminist-pacifist satire on patriarchy written on the brink of World War Two, asserts that women can not join the male-dominated society but must create a new society--an "outsiders' society"--using passive and active methods to work for the same aims. Friedan's book parallels Woolf's in subject matter: analyzing a women's movement; working for women's awareness of their educational, economic, and professional inequalities; and agreeing that not to bring feminine values into the public forum threatens human survival. Friedan analyzes the first stage of the women's movement, then calls for a second stage, one which liberates men from their "macho" image and restructures family and home. Despite some similarities in their attitudes, the major difference between Friedan and Woolf lies in Woolf's insistence on women's staying outside the system, while Friedan argues that women can no longer remain outside, but must work on the "inside," restructuring family and home to benefit both men and women. (MM)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED298510

# Virginia Woolf's "Three Guineas" and Betty Friedan's "The Second Stage": The Role of the Outsider

Nancy Hynes

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Nancy Hynes

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Woolf's Three Guineas and Betty Friedan's The Second Stage:
The Role of the Outsider

When Elaine Martin and I planned this session last fall, we wanted to bring together two kinds of "texts": the traditional idea of "text" as printed page in Virginia Woolf's classic Three Guineas, and a non-traditional idea of "text" as women's nonviolent peace actions, "texts" of rhetoric in themselves, using language and symbolic action to communicate a particular message to a particular audience. We wanted to create a situation where the readers and the rebels, the scholars and the organizers, could enrich each other's efforts by sharing their "texts". We chose to focus on the outsider theme in Woolf's book and in women's peace actions. I also wanted to examine Betty Friedan's The Second Stage to see how she views outsiders. Basically, therefore, I will analyze the outsider of Woolf's Three Guineas and Betty Friedan's The Second Stage, and Elaine will describe and analyze the outsiders in the New England Women of Faith Coalitions in which she herself participated. We hope to raise enough questions to spark strong discussion among you. Karen Swenson, a St. Benedict's student who read and discussed these works with us during the year, will participate in the discussion.

Virginia Woolf wrote Three Guineas fifty years ago on the brink of World War II. In this brilliant feminist-pacifist satire on patriarchy, a text only now getting the attention it deserves, she links the issues of war with the issues of women. In a series of intricate arguments ("insider language") she convinces her audience, a middle-aged male lawyer, that if he wants women's help in preventing war, he is also going to have to solve the problems of equal education, professions, and wages for women.

She divides her letter into three parts: education, professional opportunity, and intellectual honesty. If you'll look at the bottom of the page I've handed out, you'll see the tri-part structure. Woolf asks the uncomfortable questions about a male-dominated education (the best that Oxford and Cambridge can give which leads people to use force instead of hating it; about the "poison mulberry

tree of property" which encourages competition, possessiveness and jealousy; about an "adultery of the brain" that fosters intellectual dishonesty when it is motivated by power and money. This tri-part argument leads to one conclusion: she cannot join the male lawyer's peace society to prevent war; instead, she must set up a new society, an outsiders' society, to work for the same aim.

This Outsider Society, described in detail in Part III, abides by certain "active" and "passive" rules: [Passive] not to fight with arms, not to work in munitions factories or nurse the wounded, not to incite brothers, fathers, or friends to fight (maintain "indifference"), not to compete, and not to accept external honors; [Active] earn one's own living, defend the right to independent opinion (a "mind and will of their own"), and creatively criticize institutions, such as church and university (106-112).

She recognizes that this Outsider Society and the male lawyer's society have the same end—freedom, equality and peace—but they will use different means to achieve it. In fact, Woolf can already see signs of this "new model":

> The mayoress of Woolich (where 12,000 are engaged in making arms) has refused even to "darn a sock" for the war.
> Miss Clarke describes women's sports as playing for the love of the game instead of for competition.
> Women, ignored by male ministers, are dropping out of church—"an experiment in passivity." (116-117)

Antigone and the interconnectedness between the private and the public world support Woolf's proposal. She sees Antigone as a model because women want, like Antigone, not to break the law, but to find the law (138). Woolf's footnote elaborates on the laws written in the hearts of human beings; she hopes that it is possible for each sex to recognize what laws hold good in its own case, to respect each other's laws, and to share the results of these discoveries (185). In fact, she concludes, if we continue to separate the sexes

and let one dominate over the other, if we continue to separate the public world from the private world, as happened with Creon and Antigone, both houses will be ruined (143).

She summarizes the role of the Outsider Society in two phrases: find new words ("burn the word feminist") and create new methods, both active and passive (101, 106-12). We women can do this best by remaining outside the male peace society but in cooperation with its aim (143).

One problem with this part of Woolf's argument is that if women remain outside a system only, how can they ever hope to change it? However, if women join the system, Ellen Goodman points out in Betty Friedan's The Second Stage, doesn't the system change them? Goodman says that in the 1980's women discovered it's easier to join systems than change them and "It is simpler to dress for success than to change the definition of success" (Friedan 33).

A second problem in Woolf's theory is her "experiment in passivity," suggesting non-action, submission, inertia. If the Outsider Society hopes to change the system, shouldn't it take action rather than "maintain indifference"?

A third issue is that Woolf claims that she, as a woman, is an outsider and piles up convincing evidence of it, yet she uses "insider" language to clarify her arguments with the male lawyer. In another paper I have analyzed this "outsider" voice as the chameleon "we," a voice which changes its "colors" with its audience and situation, allowing the outsider to move skillfully from unanimity ("we" who agree) to open attack ("we" who differ from you) to covert attack ("we" who appear to agree). A glance at the chart I've handed out shows examples of each voice and how it operates. The outsider voice polarizes men and women by emphasizing the inequalities between men and women's education, professions, and wages. The mock man voice satirizes male values by appearing to agree, for example, with male arguments that Cambridge and Oxford are rich because they engage in research for war and then undercuts their argument by

wondering why the finest education in the world teaches people to use force instead of hating it. Finally, the humane voice unifies men and women by referring to the bloody photographs of the Spanish Civil War—"ruined horizons, dead children"--because on this issue both men and women can agree: war is horrible and must be stopped.

I've gone into some detail in this analysis because it sheds light on Woolf's strategy and opens up what seems to be her closed, passive insistence on remaining "outside" the system to a more spontaneous insistence on creative suggestions for change "inside" the system.

It's clear from the chart that she couldn't stay "outside" the system but becomes an "insider" when she martials her facts to polarize, satirize, and unify. It clear from her three-part organization that she is structuring a rational, logical, "insider" argument (what society calls "male") to convince her male lawyer that the issues of women are inseparably connected with the issues of war. By using "insider" language to polarize, satirize, and unify, she's pointing to creative ways to revolutionize the system.

What can Woolf's theory and strategy offer us today? How do they compare to current feminist writings, such as Betty Friedan's Second Stage (1982)?

Although I examined the work of Kate Millet and Anne Wilson Schaef, I chose to focus on Friedan since her book parallels Woolf's in subject matter. Both analyze a women's movement; both work for women's awareness of their educational, economic, and professional inequalities; and both agree that not to bring feminine values into the public forum threatens human survival (Woolf 143; Friedan 194

Let me briefly summarize Friedan's argument. She describes the first stage of the women's movement of the 1960's-70's as saying no to the feminine mystique and organizing to confront sexism (41). However, this first stage, she says, went too far, creating extreme images of bra burning, anti-man, anti-family

women's libbers or suburban housewives trapped in "comfortable concentration camps," an image she herself helped to create (46-47). The slogan of "the personal is political," Friedan asserts, was also carried too far, resulting in a twisted picture of women as "oppressed" and men as "oppressors" (48, 239).

The result, according to Friedan, was that women found themselves in double-binds: Could they change the system if they stayed outside it? If they went inside the system, did they risk joining it instead of changing it? Friedan quotes three feminists—Diane Shaw, Ellen Goodman, and Lynda Hurst—as not being against the women's movement but "fed up" with the feminist paranoid label (32-33). Friedan also notes that the lure of being "inside" the political establishment can keep ardent feminist politicians quiet. Representative Lynn Martin (Illinois) was asked how she rated women's issues: "Zip. There isn't any politician, male or female, who likes these issues, because they're such trouble. You think anyone who got far enough to be elected to Congress is going to bring up these issues on her own?" (215).

Given this kind of co-option and polarization on the issues, Friedan calls for a second stage: one which liberates men from their macho image and which restructures family and home. This second stage can't be seen in terms of women alone, she insists; it may not even be a women's movement because men may be on the cutting edge. It redefines family, work, and love, transcending the first stage of the struggle for power. It restructures our institution in the second stage, thus transforming power (28).

It is easy to see that despite their similarities, Friedan and Woolf are very different: Woolf's work describes her individual reaction to the experience of inequality, creating the metaphor of the outsider to express it. Like Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," her book calls women to individual creative action. Betty Friedan's book, on the other hand, is a direct call to collective

action for systemic change. The biggest difference between Friedan and Woolf lies in Woolf's insistence on women's staying outside the system since indeed they are outside, while Friedan argues that women can no longer remain outside. They must work on the "inside" to change the focus of the battle from the sexual politics of women against men to a focus on home and family, correcting the imbalance of male-female workloads by re-structuring the economic system, providing quality child care, and re-designing housing for community living (41, 257, 286). Friedan's suggestions, then, call for outsiders strong enough to work on the "inside" to restructure family and home to benefit both men and women.

A final issue is the apparent "classist" appeal of both Woolf and Friedan. Both address "daughter" in their books. Woolf's repeated reference to "daughters of educated men" creates irony because it asserts women's dependence on men and criticizes the educated class for displaying the "rites of savages" in its pursuit of money, possessions, and power. Nonetheless, it also limits her audience to upper and middle class educated people, omitting the working class and suggesting a kind of hierarchy of her own. Betty Friedan also refers to women as "daughters" for whom she will "put the right name" to their new problem, again suggesting a hierarchical model and addressing the educated middle and upper class (34). If there is one thing women's coalition for peace have insisted upon, it is to do away with hierarchy.

Despite this classist issue, which Woolf herself worried about, she has much to offer us today. Although her emphasis on the outsider society and "experiment in passivity" seems narrow and confining at times, her use of "insider" language and her general call for women to find new words and create new methods opens the door to moving inside and outside the system as the situation calls for it. Certainly Woolf has much to say to women's

coalitions for peace. Her first guidelines, you remember, are to resist taking up arms and to band together as outsiders in order to speak the truth. Following are two examples of modern feminist-pacifists on the outsider theme:

—Barbara Deming, a major writer for feminist nonviolent action, describes integrated peace marches from Quebec to the American South to Cuba and long fasts in jail. She defines these nonviolent actions as the refusal of outsiders to be put outside. Their dramatic actions make it hard for people to look away from the facts (like Hamlet's play to "catch the conscience" of the king).

—Pam McAllister, editor of Reweaving the Web of Life, defines nonviolence as the "merging of our uncompromising rage at the patriarchy's brutal destructiveness with a refusal to adopt its ways—a refusal to give in to despair or hate or to let men off the hook by making them the 'Other' as they have made those they fear 'Others'" (iii).

On a personal note, I'm grateful to Virginia Woolf for raising my awareness of the oppressions of patriarchy and to Betty Friedan's earlier work for naming the feminine mystique. Because Woolf was willing to turn her pen toward writing down the connections between violence and patriarchy, other women have gained courage and discovered strength in bonding with women as outsiders. For example, women engaged in nonviolent actions for peace see the connections between Trident submarines and wife beating. Because Betty Friedan and others were willing to organize front lines of consciousness raising, side liners like me have the courage to commit themselves to the issues of feminist studies and inclusive language. In short, we need both insiders and outsiders. Certainly Elaine Martin's descriptions of women's coalitions for peace will help us see how these actions, both inside and outside, have empowered women, giving them a new sense of identity and courage.

## Bibliography

Deming, Barbara. Prisons That Could Not Hold: Prison Notes 1964-Seneca, 1984. San Francisco: Spinsters, Inc., 1985.

Friedan, Betty. The Second Stage. New York: Summit, 1981.

McAllister, Pam, ed. Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence. Philadelphia: New Society, 1982.

Woolf, Virginia. Three Guineas. New York: Harecourt, Brace and World, 1938.

Nancy Hynes, ~~Assoc.~~ Professor of English
English Department
College of St. Benedict
St. Joseph, MN 56374